



Sgt. 1st Class Johnnie Davis, career counselor with the Army Reserve Retention and Training Division, starting singing in church at age 20. Davis took second place in Wednesday's McGill Idol competition at The Commons at Fort McPherson. He said some people may be surprised to know one of his favorite singers is Barry Manilow.

Photos by Robin Brown

# Singers show skills during first McGill Idol competition



Jenny Lawson, 15, daughter of Kathy and Col. Jeffrey Lawson, deputy commander for clinical services, Lawrence Joel Army Health Clinic at Fort McPherson, is a student at Alpharetta High School in Alpharetta. Lawson won second place in the youth category.

Sgt. 1st Class Latonya Edison, scheduler, G7 Training support branch, First Army, and Shari Nettles, community relations officer, U.S. Army Garrison Public Affairs Office, volunteer to help contestants register for the competition May 14 at Fort McPherson's Post Theater.



Robin Brown  
Sentinel editor

While the rest of the world was cheering for Jordan Sparks as the next American Idol Wednesday night, attendees at The Commons at Fort McPherson were voting for their own first McGill Idol.

Terrence Brooks and Teria Litman accepted their titles and accolades as adult and youth winners, respectively.

Outstanding! Smooth control! Wonderful! Those were some of the words used to describe the singing competitors. As the crowd cheered for their favorites, the contestants were bringing their best performances.

Brooks, an independent contractor and retired Air Force staff sergeant from Rockdale County, took the audience back to a familiar 1980 hit with "One in a Million, You," by Larry Graham. Litman, 11, daughter of Melinda Litman, chief, G4 Supply and Services Division with First Army, captured hearts with Stephanie Mills' "Home."

People usually say, "It was a long road getting here," after such a win; however, McGill Idol didn't take nearly as long as the televised American Idol.

Judges Lt. Col. Carmen Estrella-Norman, commander, Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army Garrison (Hq. Bn., USAG); 1st Sgt. Christian J. Carr, first sergeant, Hq. Bn., USAG; and Angelita Howard, director, Saint Leo University, narrowed down 34 contestants to 16 finalists within hours May 14, and nine days later there stood two winners.

The adult category winner received \$500 and \$250 for the second place prize. The first-place winner in the youth category – 6 to 17 years old – received a \$500 savings bond; the second-place winner received a \$250 savings bond. Contestants were judged on their vocal and stage performance, appearance and originality. In the end, the audience chose the winners and Sgt. 1st Class Johnnie Davis, adult, and Jenny Lawson, youth, as second-place winners.

Davis is a career counselor with the Army Reserve Retention and Training Division. Judges said his rendition of Billie Ocean's "Suddenly" was "nice and very deliberate."

Lawson, 15, daughter of an adult contestant, Kathy Lawson, and Col. Jeffrey Lawson, deputy commander for clinical services, Lawrence Joel Army Health Clinic at Fort McPherson, performed with "great stage presence," as she sashayed across the stage singing "It's a Little Too Late" by Tanya Tucker.

All the contestants did a great job, said the judges, this was a great opportunity for them to grow and polish their skills.

Litman, a student at Whitewater Middle School, said she is inspired by her mom, who also sings. She has been singing for two years in church and with the school choir. Litman listens to rhythm and blues, hip hop and jazz compositions. With her winnings, Litman plans to buy a cell phone and music player. The rest goes into to savings, she said.

Brooks said he's been singing so long, he's confident on stage. He has sung since childhood in church, at weddings and various events. Brooks isn't attached to one specific genre, but is inspired by Al Jерro, Earth, Wind and Fire and others. "I'm just waiting for them to create an American Idol for seniors." His favorite to win American Idol was Malinda Doolittle until she was cut, but he said, "Jordan will be good."



Judges Angelita Howard, director, Saint Leo University; 1st Sgt. Christian J. Carr, first sergeant, Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army Garrison (Hq. Bn., USAG); and Lt. Col. Carmen Estrella-Norman, commander, Hq. Bn., USAG, enjoy the performances of each Idol contestant.



Audience members cheer on their favorite contestant, especially when it was their own child, such as Melinda Litman (holding the candle), chief, G4 Supply and Services Division with First Army.



U.S. Army Garrison Commander Col. Marguerite Garrison shows her approval of a song selection by squeezing in a few dance moves.



Loretta Warner, visual information specialist, Training and Support Center, Directorate of Information Management, captures the auditions on tape.